Using Mnemonics to Teach Science Vocabulary

Objective: To use mnemonics to learn definitions of science terms

Setting and Materials

Setting: resource room
Materials: 8 ½ X 11 in. cards with keyword, vocabulary word, definition, and interactive
        illustration of keyword and term (see example below)
        teacher script
        daily quizzes with 12 targeted terms
        weekly tests with 48 words
        5 x 8 in. cards with vocabulary word on one side and keyword on other side
        3 x 5 in. index cards to make personal set of vocabulary words
        poster of IT FITS strategy steps (see example below)

Content Taught

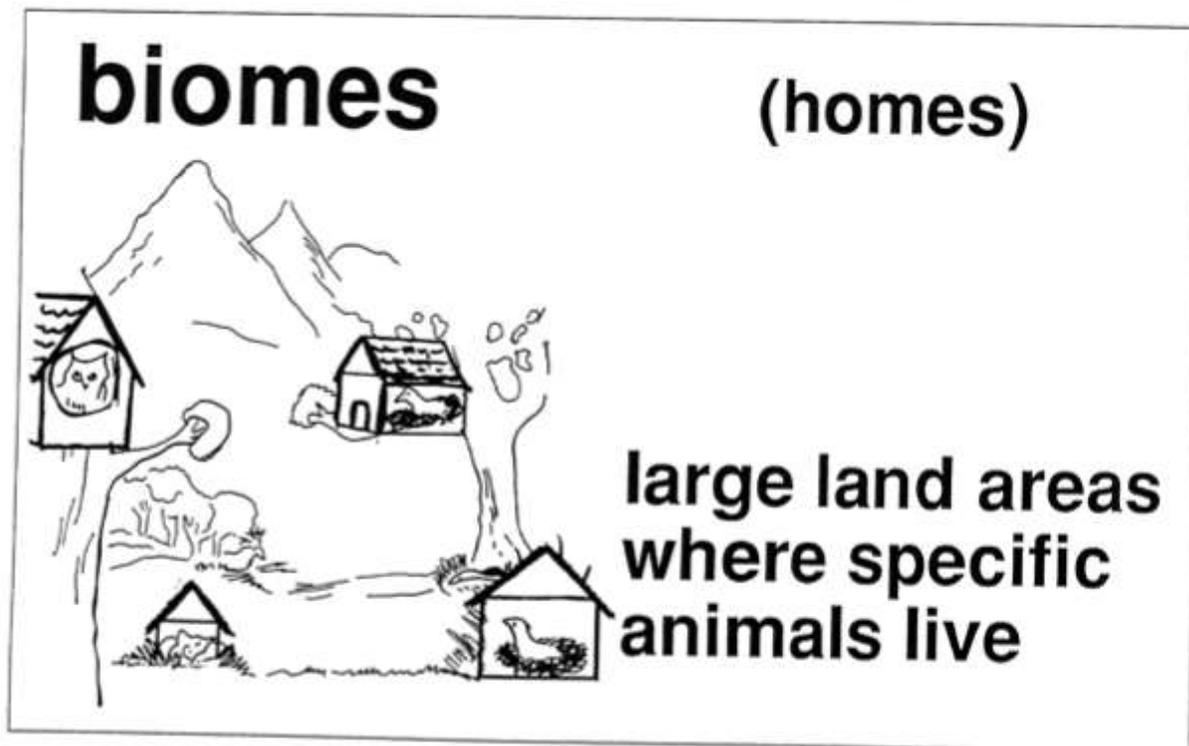Vocabulary terms related to science using keywords, definitions, and interactive illustrations

Figure 2. Imposed keyword mnemonic card. (*Source:* King-Sears's dissertation research.)
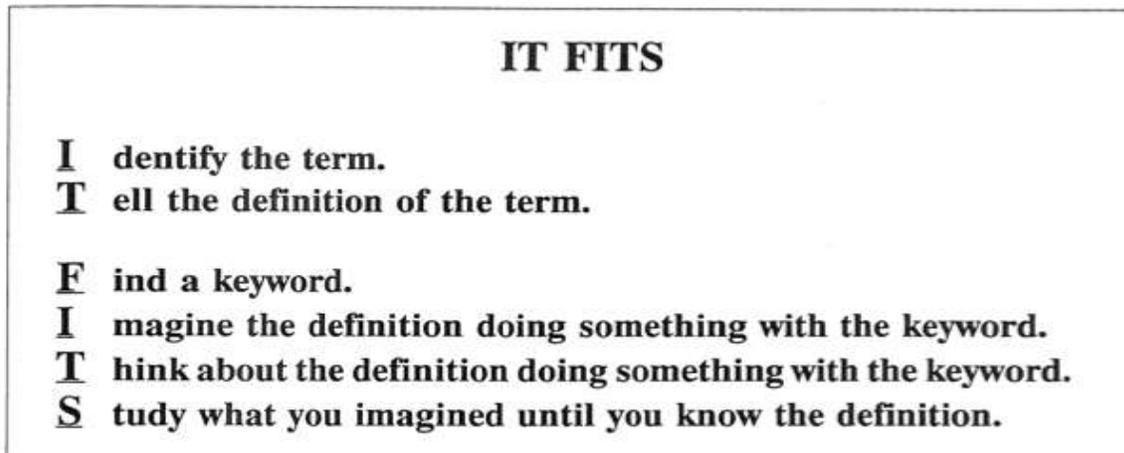
IT FITS

I dentify the term.
T ell the definition of the term.

F ind a keyword.
I magine the definition doing something with the keyword.
T hink about the definition doing something with the keyword.
S tudy what you imagined until you know the definition.

Figure 3. Induced keyword mnemonic strategy. (*Source:* King-Sears's dissertation research.)

Teaching Procedures

1. Present vocabulary term and keyword to students using 5 x 8 in. card that has the term on one side and keyword on the other.
2. Next, use the 8 ½ x 11 in. card containing the term, term's definition, keyword, and interactive illustration to demonstrate the way to remember the term's definition.
3. Say, "The next word we are going to study is _____. What is the next word? The keyword for _____ is _____. What is the keyword for _____? _____ means _____. What does _____ mean? The way we remember that _____ means _____ is to think about this picture of _____ doing _____ with _____. What is ____ doing with _____? And what does _____ mean? How do you remember that _____ means _____?
4. Introduce, demonstrate, and display the IT FITS strategy poster.
5. Place the cards on the chalkboard for the duration of the lesson so students can refer to them when completing the FITS part of the strategy.
6. Encourage students to find a keyword that "fit" the vocabulary term and then have them think of an interactive illustration to "fit" they keyword and term's definition.
7. Circulate around the room to assist and prompt students to use this strategy to make up their own keywords and imagine interactive illustrations.
8. Have students make personal sets of the terms and keywords on 3 x 5 in. cards.

Evaluation

Record the number of correct keywords and definitions for each student.

Lesson Plan Based on:

King-Sears, M. E., Mercer, C. D., & Sindelar, P. T. (1992). Toward independence with keyword mnemonics: A strategy for science vocabulary instruction. *Remedial and Special Education*, *13*, 22-33.